

Education Cabinet

Celebrate your heritage during Kentucky Archives Week

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Archival and manuscript repositories preserve the documentary heritage of our communities, our states, and our nation. Kentucky Archives Week, part of American Archives Month, will be observed October 7-13, and I would like to encourage everyone to join in the celebration.

As Commissioner of the Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives (KDLA), one of the privileges of my job is presiding over the Kentucky State Archives. Some of these records have intrinsic historical value: court records involving Abraham Lincoln, a land grant signed by Thomas Jefferson, the public papers of most of Kentucky's governors and more. Other records, including deeds, marriages, wills and court cases, are essential to historians and genealogists in researching the past.

KDLA holdings include public records created by state and local government agencies and date back to the late 18th century. We provide a safe and secure environment for nearly 100,000 cubic feet of original records, as well as over 60,000 rolls of microfilmed records. We also serve as a centralized research facility for the records of local governments and judicial agencies for many of Kentucky's 120 counties and for state government agency records.

Citizens' rights also are secured by these records because they document land titles and records of other legal transactions that help individuals in receiving many benefits, such as gaining Social Security or veterans' payments, obtaining mortgages, securing passports or adopting a child, among other actions. Government records, where individual actions or events are recorded as transactions with government offices, are often the only written account people leave behind.

KDLA is not the only repository for government records. Many colleges and universities have established archives to document and preserve their own rich traditions and to collect manuscripts, photographs, and other documents from private individuals. Many churches and religious organizations also have long established archives. In recent years, corporate archives have become more and more prevalent as businesses recognize the need to efficiently maintain their records as part of good organizational management.

Kentucky also benefits from historical societies, including the Kentucky Historical Society and The Filson Historical Society, which collect private manuscripts. In addition, many public libraries, local historical and genealogical societies, and museums maintain archival and manuscript collections relevant to their locality or region.

Although their collections vary and formats may include everything from paper to photographs to computer records, all archives share a common purpose: to preserve historical records and make them available for use.

The archives across the Commonwealth tell the story of Kentucky. I urge everyone to explore his or her own history and to take advantage of the outstanding archival and manuscripts collections that are available throughout our state and especially to support and celebrate these institutions during Kentucky Archives Week. For more information, please see <http://archivesweek.ky.gov/>